

**Connecticut General Assembly**

**Education Committee**

**Testimony: JANNA WAGNER**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today in support of the bill 6654 that would allow the State Board of Education to establish a resident teacher certificate.

My name is Janna Wagner and I am co-founder and Program Director of All Our Kin, a New Haven-based nonprofit dedicated to expanding access to high-quality early care and education for all Connecticut children. I am also a proud Teach for America alumna. I taught third grade in the South Bronx, New York from 1995-1997. My teaching experience, coupled with my own educational life as a New Haven Public School student, helped to solidify my commitment to doing my part to help eradicate educational inequity in my home state of Connecticut. Therefore, after graduating from Harvard School of Education, I chose to return to New Haven and to serve the community in which I was born and raised.

As you are well aware, Connecticut is a stratified and divided state, and boasts the largest achievement gap in the nation. In communities like Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven, our most vulnerable children, our community's low-income children and children of color, do not always have access to the schools and teachers they need and deserve. But, in 150 classrooms throughout Connecticut Teach for America teachers are helping to eradicate these educational inequities one classroom at a time.

TFA teachers are some of the nation's best and brightest young leaders who chose to teach in low-income communities where they are most needed. They are committed, driven, intelligent and well trained. Over the last two decades, TFA has invested heavily into researching and understanding what differentiates teachers who make the greatest impact on student achievement. That knowledge informs Teach For America's recruitment, training, and support program, which is designed to ensure that corps members lead their students to significant, measurable academic achievement.

These Teach for America corps members are currently teaching more than 9,000 students in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford, reaching nearly 10 percent of low-income children in the state. But, without the passage of Bill 6654 that would allow the State Board of Education to establish a resident teacher certificate, TFA's existence in Connecticut is in jeopardy.

Right now, Teach For America teachers are able to fulfill Connecticut certification requirements over the course of the summer and through the first 90 days of teaching, while on a temporary 90 day certificate. However, TFA's use of the first 90 days is at risk. Connecticut needs to create a certificate that mirrors Teach For America's well-researched and well-proven training model and timeline. That is what the Resident Teacher Certificate represents.

This kind of certificate is not unique. In virtually all of the other states where Teach For America places corps members, a statutory framework similar to the Resident Teacher Certificate exists. Therefore, I urge you to support bill 6654. Without a stronger certification framework like the Resident Teacher Certificate in place, Teach for America may be forced to leave Connecticut and our low-income communities – and in my opinion, our entire state, would lose out. Those of us who care about low-income children have a special responsibility to speak up and to advocate for educational equity so that all children have the education and opportunity they need and deserve. This is why I am here today. I respectfully ask that you support bill #6654. Thank you for your time and consideration.

